**Labor Organization During the Gilded Age**

In-class we addressed the below question. Study the notes you took to the below prompt and the typed notes below it.

How did labor respond to the growing power of corporations and to what extent were they effective?

**Strikes:**

**1877-1900 the U.S. saw 12 armed struggles between labor and management**

1. **Thibodaux, Louisiana**

* 1886- 10,000 Sugar field workers and members of the Knights Of Labor
* Workers went on strike for higher wages
* Strikers refused to work- martial law declared in Thibodaux
* Ended in violence- 30 black workers shot

1. **Tennessee Coal Mine Company**

* 1891- workers asked to sign a iron-clad contract (pledging no strikes and giving up right to check the weight of coal they mined – they were paid by the weight)
* Workers refused to sign and they were evicted from their houses- convicts replaced them
* The next night- 1000 Armed miners took control of mine, set 500 convicts free- the company surrendered and agreed to have workers not sign the iron clad contract

**New Orleans**

* 42 union locals with over 20,000 men went on general strike involving half the population of New Orleans
* General strike occurred
* Martial law declared- strikebreakers brought in
* after three days strike ended and compromise include gaining hours/wages but no recognition of unions as bargaining agents

1. **Pullman Palace Car Company**

* Pullman cars were sleeping cars that were carried by railways
* 1894 went on strike over reduction in wages and dismissal of two member of union- they received immediate support from other unions in Chicago
* Gained support of American Railway Union who had member all over the country not handle Pullman cars. Since virtually all passenger cars carried Pullman cars this amounted to a boycott of all trains (nationwide strike)
* Strikebreakers called in but strike continued
* Railroads got an injunction (court order to stop an action) and President Cleveland ordered federal troops to Chicago- in reaction hundreds of cars burned
* 14,000 police, militia, troops in Chicago, the strike was crushed
* In the end, 13 people killed, 53 seriously injured, 700 arrested

**Unions:**  
**American Federation of Labor:**

* Agreed to keep autonomy (freedom) of trade unions
* Represented skilled workers
* Fought economic issues only (not social/political – avoided Socialist/Communist issues)
* Tactic- favored negotiating a labor contract and avoided strikes
* Worked on day-to-day issues (did not try to change business practices or promote the need for any broad social changes
* Merged with the AFL-CIO (includes all trade and industry unions)

**Industrial Workers of the World (Wobblies)**

* Combination of Socialist and trade unionist
* Accepted all sorts of unskilled, immigrant, white, black, women, migrant farm workers (all of whom were excluded from craft unions)
* Adopted direct action strategies- strikes rather than labor contracts
* Some tactics included- sit-down strikes, chain picketing
* Participated in about 150 strikes before WWI
* Negative- Faced political opposition during WWI when gov’t outlawed strikes and IWW still used them, this union was regarded as being made of subversives

**Knights of Labor**

* Most powerful labor union during last half of 19th Century
* Represented all workers- men, women, white, black, citizen and immigrant, skilled and unskilled- in all industries
* Union did not survive
* Goals- ending child labor, obtaining equal pay for equal work, 8-hour workday
* Tactics included arbitration, (when mediation is called in during collective bargaining and a binding decision is made) boycotts but did not support strikes
* By 1890 union began to fall as a result of internal disputes over major concerns